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## **Ten Oregon Watersheds Included in Historic Expansion of the National Conservation Security Program**

Portland, Ore.—Conservation stewards in selected watersheds throughout Oregon will have the opportunity to participate in USDA's new Conservation Security Program, according to USDA Secretary Ann Veneman.

Veneman today announced ten watersheds across Oregon whose private land managers may be eligible for CSP. CSP is a voluntary program that financially rewards private land managers who are actively conserving natural resources.

Selected watersheds include: Mid-Columbia/Hood River, Lower Willamette, Yamhill, Coquille, Sixes, Chetco, Warner, Hells Canyon, Lower Grande Ronde, and Willow (see attached map).

Producers with the majority of their land inside these watershed boundaries have met the first criteria for eligibility in this program. Signup dates for the program have not yet been announced, but producers can begin preparing by checking out <http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov>. On the site, they will find additional information about their watershed, eligibility requirements and the signup process.

Over the next several years, all private land managers in Oregon will have the opportunity to apply for CSP as their watershed is selected for a signup.

"The selection of these ten watersheds in Oregon represents a balance of resource needs, historic stewardship, potential producer eligibility, and the technology and adequate staff needed to successfully implement the program," said NRCS State Conservationist Bob

Graham. “Nationally, the selected watersheds reflect a cross-section of land uses, crop regions and landscapes that will test the basic concepts in NRCS’ newest conservation program,” he said.

Nationally, two hundred and two watersheds have been selected representing nearly 208,000 of the nation’s potentially eligible farms and ranches covering more than 83 million acres in every state and the Caribbean area. The contracts from these eligible land owners and managers will be determined in a national selection process that will be described in the sign-up notice.

According to Graham all CSP applications that meet the sign-up criteria will be placed in an enrollment category and considered regardless of available funding.

Producers interested in participating will need to fill out a self-assessment prior to signing up for the program. Self-assessments can be found at <http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov>.

In addition, NRCS field offices throughout Oregon will hold workshops for producers to assist in filling out the self-assessment. Workshop dates and locations will be announced in December.

“Private landowners and managers in Oregon have been protecting our soil and water resources for years,” Graham said. “Now they will be rewarded for that stewardship, and will become the models for future CSP participants. It’s a bright new day for conservation and I’m delighted we’re a part of this sign-up.”

CSP is a voluntary program that supports ongoing conservation stewardship of agricultural working lands and enhances the condition of America’s natural resources. Additional information on CSP, including the Federal Register notices, public comments and frequently asked questions, is at <http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov>.

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